

# Writing an Effective Grant Proposal

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# We Will Cover

- The ideal structure
- Putting it together
- Other proposal formats
- Questions & answers

# The Ideal Structure

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Telling your story

# Proposal Narrative Components

- Statement of need
- Project plan
  - Goals and objectives
  - Activities and timeline
  - Evaluation plan
  - Budget
- Background on your organization
- Conclusion

# Mindset – Think Like the Funder, Not Like Your Organization

- What does the funder want? – not – what does your organization want to deliver?
- What language does the funder understand and appreciate? – not – are these the terms we are accustomed to using?
- Give the reader hope

# Example

“OIF/OEF vets are likely to be suffering from PTSD and TBI, and unable to maintain pre-service interactions with their dependents.”

# Make Your Proposal Tell A Story

- State the need
  - “This group knows what they are talking about.”
- Identify the solution you offer
  - “Gee, that could really make a difference.”
- Present your plan
  - “OK, I see what we need to do”
- Back up with details
  - “That makes me confident they can really do it”

# State the Need

- What problem in the community does your organization/ project address? – not – what problem does your organization have?
  - Identify the target population.
  - Use local statistics for local projects.
  - Tell a story about a person.
  - Who else is working on this problem, and where are the gaps?
- Speak the funder's language.

# Identify Your Solution - Project Goal

- How will you approach the need?
- What is your goal?
  - General statement regarding how target population will change as result of your project
- What difference will you make as a result of this work?

# Present Your Plan - Project Activities and Timeline

- Put milestone dates in place for each project activity
- Divide long tasks into shorter segments with milestones
- Check to ensure that long time intervals are well explained and understandable
- Don't promise more than you can deliver

# Present Your Plan - Staffing, Partners, Budget

- What resources do you need to fulfill your plan?
  - Staff/volunteers
  - Partner organizations
  - Facilities
  - In-kind donations
  - Cash
- Balance expenses and income

# Present Your Plan - Evaluation and Expected Outcomes

- What outcomes - changes in the target population - will result?
- How will you know if these outcomes were achieved - what measurement tools will you use?
- This becomes your outline for reports if the grant is funded
- Donors give to the future, not the past

# Introduce Your Organization

- Who are you?
- Why are you the best organization to address this need in this particular way?
  - Track record
  - Proven staff and volunteer leadership
  - Independent testimonials
    - Clients
    - Subject matter experts
    - Partner organizations

# Conclusion

- Ask for a specific amount within a specific time frame
- Remind the reader of the need and your solution
- Mention recognition opportunities, if appropriate
- Inspire the reader

# Putting It Together

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Pay attention to your package

# First Impressions Are Important

- Appear professional, polished, but modest
- Pay attention to requirements for margins, binders, number of pages, font size, etc.
- Most funders prefer simply packaged, unbound proposals on white, 8 ½" x 11" paper.

# Cover Letter or Cover Email

- NEVER “To whom it may concern”
- Summarize request
- Reference conversations you have had with staff or board members about the proposal
- Thank funder for past support, if relevant
- Offer to set up meeting or call to discuss
- Signed by Executive Director and sometimes by Board President

# Executive Summary

- It's the most important piece, because...
  - It's the only piece everyone reads
  - It's the first piece everyone reads
  - For some, it's the only piece they read
- Write it FIRST and LAST
- If the funder requires an application form, use that instead

# Attachments

- Put in same order as RFP/ guidelines
- Less is more
  - 501(c)3 letter
  - Board list
  - Key staff resumes or brief bios
  - 1 pg org. budget
  - 1 pg. project budget
  - Audited financials
- Annual report
- 1-2 current media reports about your organization
- 1-2 letters of support

# Other Formats

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Telling your story ...  
how the funder wants to hear it

# Other Formats

- Request for Proposal
- Letter Proposal/ Letter of Inquiry
- Online Applications

# Request for Proposal (“RFP”)

- RFP can be formal, semi-formal (guidelines) or totally informal (verbal)
- Use the RFP as your guide for what to say and in what order
  - Use their numbering system, format, and naming conventions
  - Answer EVERYTHING
- Put additional information in attachments

# Letter Proposals

- Letter of Inquiry/Introduction (“LOI”) may be required first step, or your only chance
  - Follow their directions, if provided
  - If not, use short version of ideal flow (need, organization info, project plan, budget)
  - Ask for permission to submit full proposal
- Focus on essentials
- Three pages MAX

# Online Applications

- Increasingly common
- Prepare your answers in a Word document, then cut and paste
- Watch word limits
- Don't wait until the last minute

# Don't Forget the Basics

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Don't do anything stupid

# Don't Forget the Basics

- Meet the deadline – no exceptions!
- Follow directions
- Review for consistency, content and presentation
- Ask an outsider to review it – listen to them
- Keep it short and simple

# Develop a Relationship

- People give money to people -- organizations don't give money to organizations
- Board to board, staff to staff
- Build trust over time
- It make take 2-3 years to get the grant you want

# Where to Learn More

## Resources

# Where to Learn More

- Foundation Center ([www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org))
- Charity Channel ([www.charitychannel.com](http://www.charitychannel.com))
- State and regional associations of nonprofits
- Association of Fundraising Professionals ([www.afpnet.org](http://www.afpnet.org))

# Questions and Answers

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Everyone

# Contact Information

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